United Nations

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# Report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Fifty-first session (2-6 October 2000)

General Assembly
Official Records
Fifty-fifth session
Supplement No. 12A (A/55/12/Add.1)

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*Note*

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Opening of the Session

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its fifty-first session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 2 to 6 October 2000. It was opened by the outgoing Chairman, His Excellency, Ambassador Raimundo Perez-Hernández y Torra (Spain).

2. Ambassador Pérez-Hernández y Torra first deplored the recent brutal murders of UNHCR staff in Indonesia and in Guinea. These tragedies highlighted the need for joint commitment to the issues of the safety and security of staff by all actors involved, including the Executive Committee.

3. Reflecting on the Committee's work over the past year, the outgoing Chairman noted that some progress had been achieved in introducing important organisational changes. They included adjustments to the annual programme budget structure, proposals on the Pledging Conference and on earmarking patterns. Despite these achievements, considerable challenges remained, notably that of diminishing resources threatening UNHCR's current and future operations.

4. The outgoing Chairman then referred to the visits he had made over the past year to Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and to the Islamic Republic of Iran. What he had seen there had made a deep impression on him, as indeed had the experience he had gained both professionally and personally as Chairman of the Committee. In concluding, he paid a sincere tribute to the world's 22 million refugees. He hoped that the proposed introduction of a World Refugee Day would help to serve as a demonstration of support for and solidarity with their cause.

## B. Election of Officers

5. Under Rule 10 of its Rules of Procedure, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: H.E. Ambassador Ali Khorram (Islamic Republic of Iran)

Vice-Chairman: H.E. Ambassador Johan Molander (Sweden)

Rapporteur: Mr. Haiko Alfeld (South Africa)

## C. Representation on the Committee

6. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session:

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United

Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Venezuela.

7. The Governments of the following States were present as observers:

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaidjan, Bahrain, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominican Republic, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Gabon, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Iceland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgizstan, Kuweit, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malawi, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, San Marino, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Swaziland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

8. Palestine was represented as an observer.

9. The European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Sovereign Order of Malta were also represented as observers.

10. The United Nations system was represented as follows:

United Nations, United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids (UNAIDS), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

11. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented by observers:

League of Arab States, Organization of African Unity (OAU), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Council of Europe, International Organization for Migration (IOM).

12. A total of 75 non-governmental organizations were represented by observers.

D. Adoption of the Agenda and other Organizational Matters

13. The Executive Committee adopted by consensus the following agenda (A/AC.96/941):

1. Opening of the session

2. Election of officers

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

4. Annual theme: UNHCR@50: from response to solutions

5. Reports on the work of the Standing Committee

   (a) International protection

   (b) Programme, administrative and financial matters

6. Consideration and adoption of UNHCR's annual programme budget for 2001

7. Reports relating to programme oversight

8. Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2001

9. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the fifty-second session of the Executive Committee

10. Any other business

11. Adoption of the report of the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee

12. Closure of the session

E. Opening Statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee

14. Assuming the chairmanship of the Committee, H.E. Ambassador Ali Khorram (Islamic Republic of Iran) expressed his appreciation for the energy and commitment shown by the outgoing Chairman and for the important contribution he had made to the work of the Committee. He also paid tribute to the High Commissioner for the visionary leadership she had shown throughout her tenure, bringing humanitarian action to the forefront of the world's attention.

15. Referring then to the recent atrocities which had resulted in the deaths of four UNHCR staff members, he stated that security issues would be one of his major concerns as Chairman. A second major focus of his work would be to enhance the dialogue between States members of the Committee on long-standing refugee situations. Such situations posed a heavy burden on host countries, particularly developing countries, and it was urgent to find new and innovative solutions. He encouraged delegations to take advantage of the opportunity offered by UNHCR's fiftieth anniversary to reflect on its

activities so far, and to assess the major challenges for the future. He then briefly described the missions he had undertaken to Thailand and to the Caucasus earlier in the year, renewing his call for the support of the international community to the efforts of host countries.

16. In conclusion, he recalled that the proceedings of the fifty-first session contained a number of new elements designed to encourage an interactive dialogue. These included a panel discussion - the first in the history of the Executive Committee - focussing on "Promoting and building peace: linking refugee and humanitarian assistance with longer-term development". It was also intended to devote more attention this year to issues of international protection and to the budget discussion.

## II. WORK OF THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

17. The High Commissioner delivered an opening statement to the Executive Committee, which is reproduced in Annex II.

18. The Committee also heard a statement by the United Nations Secretary-General, in which he paid tribute to the heroic commitment displayed by the High Commissioner during her ten years' tenure. He recalled that it had been a decade of extraordinary challenges, with an alarming shift in the nature of conflict, through which civilian populations had become both the weapons and the targets of war. Not surprisingly, UNHCR had faced challenges that were unprecedented in scale and nature, and had become a massive relief agency ministering to millions of people around the globe.

19. The Secretary-General referred to the close cooperation he had shared with the High Commissioner, working side by side in many struggles. He called for support of her legacy in three areas: strengthening the notion of asylum, for which he welcomed the proposed global consultations to revitalize the protection regime; a more timely, consistent and adequate system of funding for UNHCR's programmes; and energetic action by States to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers, particularly in light of the recent tragic loss of staff suffered by UNHCR.

20. The Executive-Director of the World Food Programme echoed the commitments by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to give absolute priority to security, conveying condolences to UNHCR staff and families for the brutal murders that had occurred. The Executive-Director then paid an impassioned tribute to Mrs. Ogata's achievements as High Commissioner, stressing that she had helped change the face of the United Nations. Her wisdom and energetic leadership had been an inspiring example within the humanitarian community. Mrs. Ogata had also successfully strengthened UNHCR's relations with the United Nations Security Council, helping that body to better appreciate the connections between political and humanitarian concerns.

21. There followed a question and answer session with the High Commissioner. The questions raised concerned such issues as strengthening the legal framework, avoiding a "pull factor" in certain refugee situations and the problems posed by protracted refugee situations.

22. The Chairman's summary of agenda item 4 (annual theme debate) is contained in Annex III. The full account of the deliberations of the

Committee, including the statements or other interventions made by delegations on all the agenda items of the meeting, as well as the closing statements by the Chairman and the High Commissioner, are contained in the summary records of the session.

## III. DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE[1]

### A. Conclusion on international protection

23. *The Executive Committee,*

*Warmly commending* UNHCR on the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Office; and *welcoming* the emphasis of this year's Note on International Protection on measures taken by the Office to make protection effective;

*Recognizing* that international protection is a dynamic and action-oriented function, carried out, in co-operation with States and other partners, to promote and facilitate admission, reception, treatment of refugees and to ensure protection-oriented solutions, towards the overall goal of enhancing respect for the rights of refugees and resolving their problems;

*Welcoming* the continued grant of asylum to large numbers of refugees by many States but *deeply disturbed* by violations of internationally recognized rights of refugees which include refoulement of refugees, militarization of refugee camps, participation of refugee children in military activities, gender-related violence and discrimination directed against refugees, particularly female refugees, and arbitrary detention of asylum-seekers and refugees; also *concerned* about the less than full application of international refugee instruments by some States Parties;

*Affirming* the importance of according priority attention to the protection needs of women, children, adolescents, and the elderly in the planning and implementation of UNHCR programmes and State policies;

*Taking note* of complex features of the evolving environment in which refugee protection has to be provided, including the nature of armed conflict and current patterns of displacement, mixed population flows, the high costs of hosting large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers and of maintaining asylum systems, the growth in trafficking and smuggling of persons, the problems of safeguarding asylum systems against abuse and of excluding those not entitled to refugee protection, as well as the lack of resolution of long-standing refugee situations;

*Recognizing* that countries of asylum carry a heavy burden, in particular, developing countries, countries in transition and countries with limited resources which host large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers; *reiterating* in this regard its strong commitment to international solidarity, burden-sharing and international cooperation to share responsibilities; and *reaffirming* UNHCR's catalytic role in assisting and supporting countries receiving refugees, particularly developing countries, and in mobilizing

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[1] Decisions adopted by the Standing Committee at inter-sessional meetings in 2000 are listed in Annex I.

assistance from the international community to address the impact of large-scale refugee populations;

*Recognizing* the positive contributions that refugees make to host countries;

*Recognizing* the need for Governments, UNHCR and the international community to continue to respond to the asylum and assistance needs of refugees until durable solutions are found; and while *noting* that voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement are the traditional durable solutions for refugees, *affirming* that voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution, when feasible;

*Noting* the discussions in the Standing Committee on the interception of asylum-seekers and refugees, and *recognizing* the importance of adopting comprehensive measures, between all relevant States and in cooperation with UNHCR, international organizations and other appropriate organizations, to deal effectively with irregular migration, trafficking and smuggling of persons, potentially including refugees and asylum-seekers, and ensure in this context that international protection and assistance needs of asylum-seekers and refugees are identified and fully met, consistent with international protection responsibilities, in particular the principle of *non-refoulement*;

*Reaffirming* that the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol remain the foundation of the international refugee regime; *noting* that complementary forms of protection adopted by some States are a pragmatic response to ensure that persons in need of such protection receive it; and *recognizing* in this context the importance of full application of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol by States Parties;

*Noting* UNHCR's initiative to launch Global Consultations on International Protection and *encouraging* UNHCR, in parallel with these Consultations, to continue to seek practical responses, in cooperation with States and other relevant actors, to address current and future protection challenges;

(a) *Welcomes* the proposal of UNHCR to commence a process of Global Consultations with States, with the close involvement, inter alia, of refugee protection experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and refugees, to revitalize the international protection regime and to discuss measures to ensure international protection for all who need it, while taking into account the legitimate concerns of States, host communities and the international community generally;

(b) *Affirms* in this context that such a process, on the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, offers important prospects for revitalizing refugee protection and promoting the effective implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, while at the same time identifying approaches to meet new situations not covered by these instruments;

(c) *Calls upon* UNHCR to report to the Executive Committee at its fifty-second session on progress made on this process.

## B. Conclusion on the CIS Conference follow-up

24. *The Executive Committee,*

*Recalling* the Programme of Action adopted in May 1996 by the Regional Conference to address the problems of refugees, displaced persons, other forms of involuntary displacement and returnees in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and relevant neighbouring countries and the conclusions of the Executive Committee at its forty-seventh, forty-eighth, forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions;

(a) *Welcomes* the Report and Recommendations on the future of the Conference follow-up process adopted at the fifth meeting of the Steering Group in July 2000;

(b) *Endorses* the decision of the Steering Group to continue activities in the *Follow-up to the 1996 Geneva Conference on the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Migration and Asylum Issues* for five years, with the emphasis placed on four thematic issues;

(c) *Reaffirms* the importance and continuing validity of the Programme of Action which will remain a basis for future activities to build on, consolidate and make sustainable the achievements attained so far, and stresses the necessity to reinvigorate joint efforts in making further progress in the follow-up;

(d) *Encourages* all interested States to actively participate in future activities to the extent that their interests and priorities are addressed and to cooperate on multiple complementary planes, with the plan of holding high-level review meetings based on progress achieved and of considering further activities within the framework of the follow-up;

(e) *Welcomes* the progress made in a number of the CIS countries in implementing the Programme of Action in both governmental and non-governmental sectors, in particular, as indicated in the Assessment Report of the Conference process;

(f) *Calls upon* Governments in all countries of the CIS, who bear the primary responsibility for addressing the acute problems of population displacement that they face, to renew and strengthen their commitment, both practical and political, to implementing the Recommendations in the spirit of the Programme of Action to ensure more consistent and far-reaching progress, especially in the fields of human rights and refugee protection, and the problems of formerly deported peoples;

(g) *Notes* the importance of joint efforts to overcome the constraints in continuing to pursue the goals of the Programme of Action, by achieving, *inter alia*, a higher level of political support, durable political solutions to conflicts, further democratization and building of civil society, full implementation of legislation, adequate cooperation on a regional or bilateral level, deeper involvement of international financial institutions and development agencies, and availability of financial resources;

(h) *Notes* that the serious challenges faced by the countries of the region cannot be met by the resources and the experience of those countries alone;

(i) *Welcomes* the support rendered by other States to the process so far, including the reaffirmation of that support at the meeting of the Steering Group in July 2000 and calls on States to continue and intensify their cooperation and support in the spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing to assist the countries of the CIS in the follow-up to the 1996 Geneva Conference;

(j) *Appreciates* the efforts made by the High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe to support the follow-up process, to mobilize resources for this, and calls on them to strengthen their efforts and mutual cooperation;

(k) *Urges* the High Commissioner to continue to inform the public and further to enhance relationships with other key international actors, such as the European Commission and other human rights, development and financial institutions;

(l) *Welcomes* the progress made in building civil society, particularly through the development of the non-governmental sector, the development of cooperation between NGOs and the Governments of a number of countries of the CIS, notes in this regard the relation between the progress made in implementing the Programme of Action and the success in promoting civil society, especially in the field of human rights;

(m) *Calls on* Governments of the countries of the CIS to further facilitate the formation and work of NGOs and, along with international organizations, to further strengthen their cooperation with NGOs and increase their involvement in the follow-up to the 1996 Geneva Conference;

(n) *Requests* the High Commissioner to keep the Executive Committee informed of measure taken in the implementation of the recommendations and of the progress achieved on the issue of follow-up to the 1996 Geneva Conference.

## C. Decision on safety of staff of UNHCR and all other Humanitarian Personnel

25. *The Executive Committee,*

*Commending* the High Commissioner, her staff and their implementing partners for the competent, courageous and dedicated manner in which they discharge their responsibilities;

*Strongly deploring* injuries and death and other forms of physical and psychological violence sustained by staff members, notably the recent violence and murders in Indonesia and in Guinea, and *expressing* deep outrage that certain incidents were specifically targeted at humanitarian personnel;

*Deeply concerned* that such despicable practices risk having a serious impact on UNHCR and other humanitarian operations, and result in considerably increased danger and suffering for the populations which humanitarian personnel are seeking to protect and assist, while posing grave security risks in refugee and returnee-populated areas;

(a) *Reaffirms* its previous conclusion and decision on this subject, adopted at its forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions;[2]

(b) *Recalls* relevant General Assembly resolutions[3] relating to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, as well Security Council resolutions and, in particular its recent Presidential Statement[4] strongly deploring the fact that incidents of violence have continued, leading to a rising toll of casualties among humanitarian personnel;

(c) *Urges* States to assume fully their responsibilities of safeguarding the physical security of personnel of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, as well as all other humanitarian personnel, and to ensure their safe and unhindered access in order to allow them to perform efficiently their task of assisting the affected civilian population, including refugees and internally displaced persons;

(d) *Calls on* States to take all possible measures to investigate fully any crimes committed against humanitarian personnel, to bring to justice persons responsible for such heinous crimes taking fully into account their gravity, to enact effective national legislation as required for that purpose, and to consider signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of an International Criminal Court;

(e) *Notes* that the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel[5] is now in force, *urges* those States who have not yet done so to consider signing and ratifying this Convention, but *notes* in this regard that the Convention does not automatically apply to most humanitarian personnel, and therefore *urges* States to respond rapidly to the recommendation of the United Nations Secretary-General to extend protection to all humanitarian personnel, through the conclusion of an optional protocol to the 1994 Convention or by other appropriate means;

(f) *Encourages* UNHCR to further develop and integrate appropriate security arrangements in its operations and to allocate adequate resources for the safety and security of its staff and the populations under its care.

D. Decision on administrative, financial and programme matters

26. *The Executive Committee,*

(a) *Confirms* that the activities proposed under the Annual Programme Budget for the year 2001 as set out in document A/AC.96/932 have been found, on review, to be consistent with the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner (General Assembly Resolution 428 (V)), the High

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[2] A/AC.96/895, paragraph 20; A/AC.96/911 paragraph 28
[3] General Assembly Resolution 54/192
[4] S/PRST/2000/4
[5] General Assembly Resolution 49/59, Annex

Commissioner's "Good Offices" functions as recognized, promoted or requested by the General Assembly, the Security Council, or the Secretary-General, and the relevant provisions of the *Financial Rules for Voluntary Funds Administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees*;

(b) *Approves* the programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under the 2001 Annual Programme Budget amounting to $ 872,403,100, including an Operational Reserve of $ 79,309,400 (representing 10 per cent of programmed activities), all of which are detailed in the Table I.3; which together with the United Nations Regular Budget contribution of $ 19,124,600 and provisions for Junior Professional Officers ($ 7.0 million) bring total requirements in 2001 to $ 898,527,700; and *authorizes* the High Commissioner within this total appropriation, to effect adjustments in Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and the Headquarters budgets, from unrestricted funds;

(c) *Approves* the revised Annual Programme Budget for the year 2000 amounting to $ 824,740,973, which together with the United Nations Regular Budget contribution of $ 20,191,400 and provisions for Junior Professional Officers of $6,826,400, as well as the needs under Supplementary Programmes in 2000, bring total requirements in 2000 to $ 942,346,173 (see Table I.3);

(d) *Requests* the High Commissioner, within the resources available, to respond flexibly and efficiently to the needs currently indicated under the Annual Programme Budget for the year 2001, and *authorizes* her, in the case of additional new emergency needs that cannot be met fully from the Operational Reserve, to issue Special Appeals and create Supplementary Programmes;

(e) *Requests* the chair to convene, as soon as possible after the conclusion of the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee, a series of informal consultations in preparation for the 2002 budget, and with a view to enhancing the strategic budgeting process;

(f) *Requests* UNHCR to continue discussions with the Standing Committee on a regular basis on the prioritization and management of resources under the unified budget with a view to ensuring that core needs are met;

(g) *Notes* the *Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the Accounts of the Voluntary Funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 1999* (A/AC.96/933), and the High Commissioner's *Follow-up Actions to the Board of Auditors Report* (A/AC.96/933/Add.1); as well as the *Report of the ACABQ on UNHCR's Annual Programme Budget for the year 2001* (A/AC.96/932), the *Report of the High Commissioner on the work of UNHCR's Inspection Activities* (A/AC.96/934) *and the Report on UNHCR's Evaluation Activities* (A/AC.96/935), and requests to be kept regularly informed on the measures taken to address the recommendations and the observations raised in these various oversight documents;

(h) *Urges* member States, in the light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, to respond generously and in a spirit of solidarity, and in a timely manner, to her appeals for

resources to meet the approved Annual Programme Budget and non-foreseen emergencies.

## E. Decision on the Pledging Conference

27. *The Executive Committee,*

*Recalling* the decision of the Standing Committee at its eighteenth meeting in July 2000, proposing an alternative pledging arrangement designed to strengthen the dialogue between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and donors on resource mobilization within the context of its unified programme budget;

*Reaffirming* in this context the need to link more closely the procedures relating to the adoption of UNHCR's annual programme budget, the issue of a Global Appeal and the funding mechanism;

(a) *Decides* to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution;

*The General Assembly,*

(i) *Recalling* its resolutions 1556 (XV) of 18 December 1960 and 1729 (XVI) of 20 December 1961 on the convening of an ad hoc Committee of the Whole, under the chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly, as soon as practicable after the opening of each regular session of the General Assembly for the purpose of announcing pledges of voluntary contributions to the refugee programmes for the following year;

(ii) *Recalling* also that the ad hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the announcement of voluntary contributions to the programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been convened annually, under the chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly or his/her designate at United Nations Headquarters in New York, immediately following the debate on the report of the High Commissioner in the Third Committee;

(iii) *Noting* that the General Assembly, in its resolution 54/146 of 17 December 1999, endorsed the presentation of a unified annual programme budget of the Office of the High Commissioner;

(iv) *Noting* also that financial requirements under the annual programme budget for UNHCR's programmes are presented in the Global Appeal issued each year in late November/early December in Geneva forming the base for pledges in response to the information provided in the Global Appeal;

(v) *Decides*, in order to improve and rationalize the funding mechanism following the adoption of the annual programme budget, that the ad hoc Committee of the General Assembly may be convened as from 2001 at Geneva, the Headquarters of UNHCR.

F. Decision on UNHCR's 50th anniversary and on World Refugee Day

28. *The Executive Committee,*

(a) *Decides*, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to forward for adoption by the United Nations General Assembly the following draft resolution:

*The General Assembly,*

(i) *Commends* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its leadership and coordination of international action for refugees; and *acknowledges* UNHCR's tireless efforts to provide international protection and assistance to refugees and other persons of concern and promote durable solutions for their problems during the past 50 years;

(ii) *Pays* tribute to the dedication of United Nations humanitarian workers and associated personnel, the staff of UNHCR in the field, including local staff, who risk their lives in the performance of their duties;

(iii) *Reaffirms* its support for UNHCR's activities, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, on behalf of returnees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons;

(iv) *Notes* the crucial role of partnerships with governments, international, regional, and non-governmental organizations as well as of the participation of refugees in decisions that affect their lives;

(v) *Recognizes* that, by virtue of its activities on behalf of refugees and other persons of concern, UNHCR also contributes to promoting the purposes and principles of the United Nations, in particular those related to peace, human rights and development;

(vi) *Notes* that 2001 marks the 50th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which sets out the foundation concepts for international refugee protection;

(vii) *Notes* that the Organization of African Unity has agreed to have an international Refugee Day coincide with Africa Refugee Day on 20 June;

(viii) *Decides* that, as of 2001, the date of 20 June will be commemorated as "World Refugee Day".

G. Decision on programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2001

29. *The Executive Committee,*

*Having reviewed* the issues before it at its fifty-first session, including the annual theme *UNHCR@50: from response to solutions*, and the *Report of the Work of the Standing Committee* (A/AC.96/942), and having in mind the decisions and conclusions of its fifty-first session;

*Noting* that the current environment is one of ever-increasing, competing demands for time and resources requiring a continuous assessment of the way in which UNHCR works, and *recognizing* that the Executive Committee should, as appropriate, provide advice to the High Commissioner in the exercise of her functions, and *considering* that it is incumbent upon States to assist the High Commissioner to the greatest extent possible:

(a) *Decides* to adopt as the framework for the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2001 the following items: international protection; programme/protection policy; programme and funding; governance; coordination; and management, financial, oversight and human resources;

(b) *Requests* that member States review, at the Planning Meeting scheduled for December 2000, specific proposals for inclusion in the work programme for 2001, taking into consideration the calendar noted by the Planning Meeting in 1999, with a view to submitting their agreed work programme to the first Standing Committee in 2001 for formal adoption; and *requests* that member States bear in mind the desirability of scheduling items over a biennial or longer period;

(c) *Requests* that UNHCR include in its documentation on each item the relevant audit and ACABQ recommendations as well as steps taken to implement those recommendations and related Executive Committee decisions and conclusions;

(d) *Authorizes* the Standing Committee to add and to delete items, as appropriate, to its inter-sessional programme of work;

(e) *Decides* to convene no more than three meetings of the Standing Committee in 2001 to be held in February/March, June/July and prior to the fifty-second plenary session of the Executive Committee;

(f) *Calls on* the Standing Committee to report on its work to the fifty-second session of the Executive Committee;

(g) *Calls upon* its members to continue efforts to ensure that the Executive Committee is a forum for meaningful and interactive debate, and provides guidance that can be implemented by UNHCR within its given mandate.

H. Decision on the provisional agenda of the fifty-second session

30. *The Executive Committee,*

(a) *Decides* to adopt the following provisional agenda for the fifty-second session of the Executive Committee:

1. Opening of the session
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
4. Annual theme
5. Reports on the work of the Standing Committee as they relate to:
   (i) international protection; and
   (ii) programme, administrative and financial matters
6. Consideration and adoption of the annual programme budget

7. Reports relating to programme oversight
8. Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2002
9. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session of the Executive Committee
10. Any other business
11. Adoption of the draft report of the fifty-second session of the Executive Committee
12. Closing of the session

I. Decision on observer participation in 2000-2001

31. The Executive Committee,

(a) Approves applications by the following Government Observer delegations for participation in meetings of the Standing Committee from October 2000 to October 2001:

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, San Marino, Syrian Arab Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Uruguay;

(b) Authorizes the Standing Committee to decide upon any additional applications from Government Observer delegations to participate in its meetings during the aforementioned period;

(c) Approves the following list of intergovernmental and international organizations to be invited by the High Commissioner to participate as observers in relevant meetings of its subsidiary bodies from October 2000 to October 2001:

United Nations specialized agencies, departments, funds and programmes, European Commission, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Sovereign Order of Malta, Executive Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States, League of Arab States, Organization of African Unity, Organization of the Islamic Conference, Council of Europe, International Organization for Migration;

J. Decision on non-governmental organization (NGO) observer participation in the work of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme and its Standing Committee

32. The Executive Committee,

Recalling its decision on observer participation in the work of the Executive Committee and its Standing Committee (A/AC.96/912), and having now completed three consecutive years of NGO observer participation;

Noting that in its resolution 52/104 adopted on 12 December 1997, the General Assembly decided to continue the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a further period of five years until the end of the year 2003;

*Recognizing* the importance of NGOs as partners in UNHCR's humanitarian work on behalf of refugees, and the useful contribution they have made to the meetings of the Executive Committee and of its Standing Committee;

(a) *Decides* to extend the observer participation of NGOs until the end of 2003;

(b) *Decides further* that the participation of NGOs as observers will continue to follow the procedure as established by the Standing Committee decision (A/AC.96/888);

(c) *Also decides* to review NGO observer participation by the end of 2003.

ANNEX I

Decisions and conclusions adopted by the Standing Committee in 2000

In accordance with the authority vested in it by the Executive Committee, the Standing Committee in 2000 adopted a number of decisions on matters included in its programme of work. The texts of these decisions are annexed to the reports of Standing Committee meetings as follows:

A/AC.96/929 *Report of the seventeenth meeting of the Standing Committee (29 February - 2 March 2000)*

Decision on programme and funding

Decision on medium-term plan

Decision on annual programme budget

Conclusion on older refugees

Conclusion on mainstreaming environmental concerns

*A/AC.96/939 Report of the eighteenth meeting of the Standing Committee (5 - 7 July 2000)*

Decision on mobilizing resources for a unified budget: the Pledging Conference; guiding principles applicable to the resourcing of UNHCR's unified budget

Decision on the annual theme of the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee

ANNEX II

Opening statement
by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to
the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's
Programme at its fifty-first session

(Monday, 2 October 2000)

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 51st session of the Executive Committee. I am pleased and honoured to introduce a very special guest, Kofi Annan - the first Secretary-General of the United Nations to address the Committee. All of us at UNHCR view this as a homecoming for our most illustrious former colleague. His wise counsel and friendship have been a tremendous source of support for me over the years. I propose that we greet him with a warm round of applause.

I am pleased to welcome Chile, Côte d'Ivoire and the Republic of Korea as new Committee members, and to congratulate the incoming Bureau and its Chairman, Ambassador Khorram of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He brings broad experience from multilateral forums that will help the Committee navigate the coming year of transition. Finally, I would like to offer special thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Perez-Hernandez y Torra of Spain: his commitment, initiative, and good humour will be long remembered at UNHCR.

Twice in the past month, we gathered in this very room to mark our sorrow and outrage at the brutal murders of our colleagues Samson Aregahegn, Carlos Caceres, Pero Simundza in West Timor, and Mensah Kpognon in Guinea. Fortunately, Laurence Djeya, who was missing after the Guinea attack, is now back home, safe, in Côte d'Ivoire. These crimes have shattered the lives of four families, of our Office, and of the entire humanitarian community. I have decided that on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Office, at Headquarters, we shall dedicate a memorial honouring our colleagues, and all UNHCR staff who have lost their lives serving the refugee cause.

Looking Back

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since I will leave office at the end of year, I hope you will allow me to speak a little longer - and to start doing so with a brief reflection on the past ten years.

When I became High Commissioner in 1991, the Cold War had just ended and people spoke of a new world order. The changes for the better were extraordinary. Democracy spread across Central and Eastern Europe and nearly all of Latin America. Apartheid in South Africa was defeated.

History did not end, as one scholar had predicted. Indeed, the times became very complicated, not least in our field of work. In 1991, within weeks of my arrival as High Commissioner, almost two million Iraqi Kurds fled to Iran and Turkey. Soon we moved into Northern Iraq, working closely with international military forces for the first time. And in the following years, especially in the former Yugoslavia, and Central Africa, we were constantly challenged to rethink our protection, assistance and solutions strategies.

The foundation of protection remained legal, but ensuring protection increasingly became an operational, practical, hands-on activity. UNHCR was on the frontlines, often in war situations. We became much more active in countries of origin, particularly when helping returnees reintegrate. The times also demanded innovative approaches to asylum. We broke new ground - and together saved many lives - by promoting temporary protection for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the same time, new patterns in conflicts made forced population movements more fluid and complex than ever before. We faced terrible ambiguities and dilemmas, frequently alone. In Bosnia and Kosovo, real international engagement came too late and only after human suffering had reached dramatic proportions. Since 1994, in the Great Lakes region, there has not been any meaningful international engagement, except for humanitarian work.

Some of the conflicts unresolved by political and diplomatic initiatives eventually triggered a military reaction by the international community. This led us into a confusing new era of so-called "humanitarian wars" - a term that troubles me greatly - and a more crowded humanitarian space.

## The Balance Sheet

A new decade - a new era - is now beginning for UNHCR. In accepting my last mandate, I said that I did not want to leave a legacy, but a future. Today, I would like to elaborate on my perception of that future - but before I do so, let me draw a short balance sheet of the period that is coming to a close.

We have had successes. The most important one is that millions of refugees, over the past ten years, have repatriated. Starting with the return of the African National Congress exiles to post-apartheid South Africa, the most significant case that followed was that of Mozambique, where a twenty-year war had uprooted more than a third of the population. We worked hard and by 1995 all 1.7 million refugees were back home and, more importantly, they stayed home.

There were successes in Asia and Latin America, too. In Cambodia, we helped close to 400,000 refugees return home. The completion of repatriation from Thailand to Laos and the closure of the Pillar Point centre in Hong Kong earlier this year signalled the end of the 25 year-old Indochinese refugee saga. I travelled to Mexico last year to witness the formal closure of

UNHCR's repatriation operation, which put an end to decades of refugee crises in Central America.

Solutions to refugee problems take time. This is a lesson I have learned over the years. But the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Vietnamese refugees, like the CIREFCA process in Central America, demonstrated that complex refugee problems can be solved when governments are committed and resources are available - and often, they are solved not only through voluntary repatriation, but also through a combination of solutions which may include local integration and the granting of citizenship, or resettlement to third countries.

Let me also speak about the unresolved refugee situations. There are many, and I will only elaborate on some. I wish to start with the crises in places where there are encouraging signs of progress, concrete in some cases and more embryonic elsewhere.

For example, minority returns are finally becoming a reality both in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Croatia. Refugees are returning to Croatia from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which hosts the largest number of refugees in Europe. Displaced people in Bosnia are even returning to towns that were virtually synonymous with ethnic cleansing. Tensions have subsided, security is better and the obstacles to return are now often more practical than political. But these welcome trends are not irreversible. More money is needed now to build houses and create jobs that will anchor returns.

Rwanda has also made progress, but it needs new development investments to consolidate returns and foster reconciliation. UNHCR's reintegration activities are winding down. Development actors must step forward. The government must have the political will to resolve the fundamental problems of power sharing and democratisation.

Burundi too is at a crossroads. The choice is between peace and renewed conflict. The latter would certainly cause massive displacement. President Mandela has given new momentum to the Arusha process. The failure of several key parties to sign on to the 28 August agreement was a disappointment, but efforts must continue. If peace comes, UNHCR is ready to help more than half a million refugees go home from Tanzania. Meanwhile, we must help the Tanzanian government maintain its generous asylum policies. Refugees are receiving only 60 per cent of the required daily food ration. Tension is building, and decreasing assistance may send the unintended message that refugees are expected to go home prematurely.

In the Horn of Africa, fighting earlier this year uprooted nearly 1.5 million people in Eritrea (including 90,000 who sought refuge in Sudan, which I visited in June). Determined international efforts, however, resulted in a cease-fire and helped address the worst consequences of the latest drought. Deployment of a UN observer mission is getting underway. People are returning home. We have now repatriated more than a quarter of those who fled to Sudan. A final peace settlement would open the way to solutions, both for people displaced recently and for the refugees from previous outflows. It would be an important stabilising factor in a region where there are other encouraging signs, for example in Somalia.

The situations where progress is evident are perhaps the most important for us, because UNHCR can make a difference. We play an important role by facilitating return and meeting humanitarian needs, while peace is built.

Elsewhere, unfortunately, solutions to refugee problems remain elusive. Let me mention a few situations that worry me most deeply.

Africa, where I have been 31 times since 1991, continues to be of the greatest concern to UNHCR. Central Africa is perhaps the most worrying area, with on-going conflicts and massive displacement in Southern Sudan, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Congo, theatre of a complex clash of political, military and economic interests, people are suffering. I want to repeat this loud and clear: millions of people are suffering, and little is done to address their plight. It is a paradox that whereas Congolese continue to seek refuge outside the country, and 1.8 million are displaced internally, over 300,000 people from neighbouring countries have sought refuge in the Congo itself! This shows the regional dimension of the crisis, but also the profound despair of people seeking safety.

As we speak, refugees are crossing into Congo Brazzaville by the hundreds - in one of the most inhospitable and inaccessible regions in the world. For how long is the international community going to ignore their plight? The Lusaka Agreement may be the only existing framework for peace - but it is stalled. Shouldn't more pressure be put on belligerents, and their supporters? I have told President Kabila, and the RCD in Goma, that the price being paid by their own people is intolerable - and I have told them, as well as President Museveni and President Kagame: don't forget the people, don't ignore the human cost of this war, when you negotiate.

The other very worrying region is West Africa. The repeated setbacks in implementing the Lomé agreement keep half a million Sierra Leonean refugees from coming home. Thousands more are displaced within the country and receive little aid. More decisive international support is needed for the further deployment of UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone.

But I have even broader concerns. On Saturday, there have been two more attacks in border areas of Guinea. We face a severe risk that instability will escalate, causing massive displacement in the region - and refugee flows may become one of the "vehicles" for the conflict to spread. For years, people fleeing Liberia and Sierra Leone found a secure refuge in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. We must give these two countries increased support in order to help refugees while preventing armed groups from infiltrating refugee-hosting areas.

Humanitarian assistance will have to be coupled with security support - President Conté of Guinea has asked help to monitor the borders with Sierra Leone and Liberia. This is a legitimate request. Peacekeeping should focus on border areas, too, if we are to prevent the conflict from spreading and a humanitarian catastrophe from unfolding.

Turning to other continents, Afghans were the world's largest refugee caseload when I became High Commissioner. Two and a half million Afghan refugees remain in exile today - even after the repatriation of more than four million people since 1992, including 166,000 from Iran and Pakistan so far this year. I have just returned from the region. Many more refugees would like to repatriate, but there are obstacles: the on-going conflict; the lack of economic opportunities, basic services, respect for human rights - and I stressed this to the Taliban authorities - particularly for the rights of women; the drought; and, last but not least, the lack of resources for humanitarian operations. At the same time, asylum fatigue creates pressure for return, and donor fatigue has left UNHCR unable to meet basic needs. Allocating more resources to this operation, both in countries of asylum and especially in Afghanistan itself, is a priority. But resources alone will not solve this problem. There has to be resolute international engagement in finding a political solution to Afghanistan's tragedy.

In Kosovo, the massive international relief operation is winding down. No one died of exposure or starvation last winter. This was no small achievement. UNHCR's focus must now be on protecting and assisting non-Albanians. Minorities in Kosovo live in a virtual state of siege in mono-ethnic enclaves under heavy KFOR guard, sustained by UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies. We must overcome the cycle of violence and revenge and the climate of impunity. Enabling the few remaining non-Albanians to stay in Kosovo will be the first step toward return as a solution for those who have left.

In the Russian Federation, the fighting that flared up in Chechnya in September 1999 uprooted a quarter of a million people and left many others living in misery. Some 170,000 displaced people and returnees face a second harsh winter in Chechnya, as are another 170,000 displaced people in Ingushetia. UNHCR provides limited cross-border assistance in Chechnya whenever and wherever possible, but we can make little impact since insecurity and the risk of kidnapping prevent us from working inside Chechnya and restricts our operations in the neighbouring republics.

The problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal has also been difficult to resolve. I visited Bhutan and Nepal in April. My impression is that we could be close to a solution for some 100,000 refugees who have been languishing in camps in Nepal for seven years. They are emphatic in their desire to go home, without preconditions. In this case, the obstacle to a solution is not a conflict - but rather, different interpretations on how to screen the refugees for return. I urged both governments to bridge the remaining differences. I suggested a formula and made UNHCR data available. Nepal accepted. Bhutan has not. Until this happens, people will continue to be deprived of their legitimate right to return.

I am deeply worried about the Timor situation, too. UNHCR worked throughout the year trying to find solutions for the East Timorese refugees in West Timor. My colleagues worked in harrowing conditions, extracting 170,000 refugees from the camps and helping them repatriate in the face of harassment, intimidation and violence from the pro-integration militias. After the murder of our three colleagues, we were forced to abandon some 125,000 refugees. Many of them would choose repatriation. All need a solution. We are committed to helping them and to supporting the Indonesian

government. But that support comes with conditions. We cannot go back until the authorities disarm and disband the militias, and arrest and prosecute the killers of our colleagues.

The list of situations where a solution remains elusive is frustratingly long - I should also mention the more than 400,000 Sudanese refugees spread across several African nations, the ever-pending return of refugees from Western Sahara, the 100,000 refugees in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border, the many people displaced by the still "frozen" conflicts of the South Caucasus, the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people in Colombia, and over half a million displaced people in Sri Lanka. In most of these situations, a combination of secessionist or rebel movements and weak conflict resolution processes - as well as a lack of international engagement and resources - have created a dangerous spiral that makes solutions very difficult to achieve.

Looking to the Future

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Saving lives, ensuring protection and finding solutions have been and will continue to be our common objectives. The balance sheet of these ten years is not too bad. We made progress in some areas, we raised the right issues in others. At times, we were accused of betraying our mandate. At times, we were told we were changing too fast. But UNHCR has to confront a dynamic environment - to evolve and improve, in order to meet the constantly changing challenges. This must continue.

It is therefore to the future that I wish to look. I see five important areas where we must reflect, plan and take concrete action - emergencies, security, complex population flows, peace building, and coexistence.

First, we must to continue strengthen UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity, which lies at the heart of our ability to save lives.

Emergency mechanisms established in 1992 dramatically improved our ability to respond to refugee crises. We created effective stand-by arrangements, particularly for staff. We raised the level of preparedness of our government and NGO partners through training and support with contingency planning.

I am proud of these achievements. But the humanitarian environment has changed since 1992. UNHCR's initial response during the Kosovo refugee crisis revealed a critical need to review our emergency mechanisms. Drawing from the recommendations of the independent Kosovo evaluation, we are implementing - within the constraints of available resources - a Plan of Action to increase our "surge capacity" through expanded stand-by arrangements, rosters of people trained and ready for rapid deployment, and the development of "kits" and "packages" to meet the immediate needs for security, logistics, telecommunications and accommodation in the field. The Head of the new Emergency Service reports directly to me and will also be responsible for security and military liaison.

This brings me to the second area where intensified efforts are needed - creating a secure environment for refugee-populated areas and humanitarian operations.

In Eastern Congo and more recently in West Timor, we have learned painful lessons about the tragic consequences that follow when refugees and perpetrators of violence are left together. Similar trends are emerging in West Africa.

Since 1997, I have advocated looking to a "ladder of options" between the extremes of fully fledged peacekeeping on the one hand, and the absence of any security measures on the other. The concept remains valid, but we must move forward with implementation. Our objective is to operationalise "medium" options, such as the deployment of international civilian monitors or police, with a view to strengthen local law enforcement mechanisms.

The recent publication of the Brahimi Panel's report on UN peace operations is a welcome step. We look forward to working with the Secretary-General in implementing its recommendations. I believe that UNHCR can bring a valuable perspective to these discussions, along with our humanitarian partners that are operating in the field and facing the same risks - WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, the Red Cross Movement, IOM and many, many NGOs .

In parallel, we must forward decisively on staff safety. As we speak, UNHCR and other humanitarian staff are exposed to danger in many places around the world. It is essential to balance the need to be next to the refugees - often in very dangerous areas - with the requirement that staff be kept safe. I have initiated separate inquiries into the Atambua and Macenta killings, led by the Inspector General. An examination of our current security arrangements, under the co-ordination of the Assistant High Commissioner, includes a re-assessment of our benchmarks for suspending operations, evacuating staff and the eventual resumption of activities. UNHCR will also contribute to the Secretary-General's ongoing review of the UN system-wide security arrangements.

We must work closely together, especially with the humanitarian community. I am grateful to Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of WFP, for being here today to address this Committee on security issues. And whilst we appreciated the sympathy and support that governments expressed last month, we now have to see your support translated in concrete measures. Staff safety costs money and should not compete with existing, under-funded programmes. We need your help, and we need it urgently.

We require political support, too. The Secretary-General has invited the General Assembly to develop a protocol to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and associated personnel that would extend legal protection to all United Nations staff engaged in humanitarian operations. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court would - with some limitations - make attacks on humanitarian workers a war crime. Urgent action is needed to make these principles international law. Refugee lives depend upon us, but we can only help them if we are alive and safe.

The third area where we have to think creatively and act concretely is in developing new approaches to complex forced population movements.

I see the issue as having two key aspects - ensuring asylum for refugees and meeting the requirements of internally displaced people more effectively. UNHCR's is fully engaged in efforts to strengthening the UN's inter-agency collaborative approach. The new Special Co-ordinator of the Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement is seconded from UNHCR. I have spoken on the issue of internal displacement recently. Let me focus here on asylum.

We face an extraordinary challenge responding to the globalisation of migration and forced displacement. Asylum seekers fleeing persecution, human rights violations and violence tend to travel with people seeking better economic opportunities, and those uprooted by environmental and other disasters. They often come from the same countries, travel the same routes, hold the same false documents and use the services of the same criminal trafficking and smuggling networks. As a consequence, asylum and irregular migration have become seriously confused in the public mind. People in many countries are also increasingly troubled by perceived abuse of the system and the cost of giving asylum. Governments have responded by making it more difficult for asylum seekers to reach their territory, detaining them upon arrival, interpreting their protection obligations restrictively and creating new and lesser forms of protection.

We cannot ignore valid concerns. But I remain firmly convinced that governments, UNHCR and refugees share a fundamental common interest in having an effective, universal international protection regime. I am heartened that the European Union, at last October's Tampere Summit, committed itself to the full and inclusive application of the 1951 Convention.

As announced in July, UNHCR is launching special consultations with governments. Our purpose is not to renegotiate the 1951 Convention. Rather, we hope to promote its full implementation and to develop the new approaches, tools and standards needed to ensure its continuing vitality and relevance. We plan to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Convention in 2001 in a variety of ways, including support to a major intergovernmental event.

The fourth area I wish to highlight is the need to bridge the "gap" between humanitarian and development assistance in the transition from war to peace.

Many post-conflict situations today are chronically under-funded. Resources come readily for high-profile humanitarian emergencies. When development investments are required to consolidate fragile returns, we have a much more difficult time getting the world's attention. Sometimes, scenes of misery and death seem to be a prerequisite for donor interest.

UNHCR, the World Bank and UNDP will convene a meeting in Washington in November. Under the leadership of the Deputy High Commissioner, we will resume the consultations initiated at the Brookings Institution in 1999 with the aim of moving forward with existing concrete proposals and strengthening links with parallel initiatives. In 1999, donors called for greater co-ordination on the agencies' part. We made efforts. I am disappointed,

however, that this has not led to more backing, and more financial support, for the transition phase.

The fifth challenge also arises in post-conflict situations. It is promoting co-existence in divided communities.

When fighting ends and repatriation begins, refugees often return to live alongside the very people they fought with. From Bosnia to Rwanda and from Liberia to East Timor, this pattern prevails. In many places, UNHCR no longer struggles with a refugee crisis, but rather a returnee crisis. Kosovo is perhaps the starkest example. During my last visit in May, I was dismayed to see children going to school under NATO military escort.

UNHCR has launched an initiative that we call "Imagine Co-Existence". We are starting with pilot projects in Bosnia and Rwanda. We face two challenges. The first is devising ways to bring people back together. The second is to make humanitarian and development actors aware of the "co-existence potential", or the lack of it, in their activities in divided communities. We have learned in many places the unifying, or dividing, power of a well, of a school, of a playground. When planning or implementing projects, we must ask ourselves: does it promote or undermine co-existence? This - I believe - is one of the fundamental humanitarian questions of the next decade.

Modernising UNHCR and obtaining adequate resources

In order to meet these five challenges, the Office must make further efforts to adapt. As for any international public organisation, change is a painful and laborious process for UNHCR. Since 1996, we have made progress. But, clearly, UNHCR must become a much more modern organisation if it wishes to remain relevant and effective.

The Office has to be managed, trained and equipped for a faster, technologically advanced and globalised environment. In Kosovo, we saw hundreds of thousands of people flee for their lives and then return home within a few weeks. Rapid emergencies - and the increasing pressures for quick solutions - put new demands on our capacity to manage staff and resources. But the revolution in communications and information technology is also a tremendous boon, allowing us to operate more effectively in some of the world's most remote and insecure areas.

Decentralisation is crucial. We started with Africa - and, I believe, in spite of all difficulties, we made the right decision. I hope other regions will follow, perhaps next in Asia. There have been difficult technical problems to resolve, but they have been compensated by the increased proximity of senior managers to the field. We must accelerate the decentralisation of financial and human resources management. The rollout of the Integrated Systems Project, in 2001, will provide managers with a comprehensive view of their activities - from protection and programme to finance and budget, human resources and the supply chain.

The other key area is of course human resources. UNHCR introduced new policies on postings, promotions and contracts in January. The guiding

principles are performance and accountability at both the individual and organisational levels. The end result should be much greater transparency, objectivity and fairness in the UNHCR's personnel practices.

We are on the right track. But the implementation process has been accompanied by significant growing pains, and I am not yet entirely satisfied with the results. We have now identified the inevitable stumbling blocks of a new system, and we are reviewing them - but we must move forward. We cannot be too slow in making postings decision, compared to the fast-changing needs in the field.

We must also examine staff rotation policies. Rotation is a very sensitive aspect of UNHCR's human resources policies, as it is entwined with the very values and "soul" of the organisation. We have to find ways to be fairer to staff who have spent long years in difficult duty stations. We must also give staff better choices at critical stages of their personal and professional lives. Better management of rotation is particularly crucial, if we are to consolidate recent progress in gender equity and increase the representation of women among UNHCR's senior staff.

Improving the management of resources requires of course the establishment of rigorous systems. This is the legitimate demand of donors. After ten years of managing incredibly complex and difficult field operations, however, I would make one appeal to you and to my own staff. Be creative. Be flexible. We must be the owners - not the prisoners - of the systems we create. We at UNHCR have always been proud of being dynamic and field-oriented. We must avoid becoming a bureaucratic, timid organisation - therefore, when necessary, we must have the clarity, courage and determination to change and adapt.

And last but not least, modernising the Office will cost money. It may be obvious, but unfortunately the financial situation of UNHCR is not encouraging.

Raising funds has been a major activity for me in the past ten years, and I am deeply grateful for the strong backing that governments have extended to UNHCR. Since this is my last speech to the Executive Committee, allow me to single out and warmly thank the United States, Japan, the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, which have been most consistent in their support.

In spite of their efforts, and the significant contributions of a few others, however, UNHCR has become an under-funded organisation. By early this year, we could already project that contributions would not match our budget - the budget approved by this very Committee last October. Meanwhile, new emergencies added nearly 100 million dollars to our requirements. The shortfall is greater than in past years.

Difficult as it may be, try to imagine the impact caused on real situations. We delayed camp maintenance work and cancelled QIP programmes in Tanzania. We put on hold the planned distribution of shelter packages to returnees living under plastic sheeting in Rwanda. We can only meet two-thirds of the housing needs in the Gueckedou refugee camp in Guinea The lack of funds in

Côte d'Ivoire slowed repatriation to Liberia. We reduced shelter support in Armenia by half. We have been unable to fully fund repatriation and rehabilitation programmes in Afghanistan.

The cutbacks have extended to activities that impact directly upon UNHCR's policy priorities - women, children and the environment. Education and training programmes in several countries suffered reductions. We also cancelled or put on hold reforestation and other environmental activities in Africa. These are just examples. When I go to the field, it pains me to see my colleagues unable to meet some of the basic needs of those they are out there to serve.

We have made great efforts. The Global Appeal, Mid-Year Report and Unified Budget aim at making our needs clearer and our operations more transparent. We are also firmly reaching out to a new, wider circle of potential supporters among the private sector, the corporate world and the public at large. To support these efforts, we are building a more professional media relations network.

We have also, repeatedly, prioritised and reduced our budget - several times this year. This has hampered the entire process of management decentralisation and made long-term planning impossible. It has diminished UNHCR's credibility and strained relations with refugees, governments and our NGO implementing partners.

The Office will be critically weakened if urgent action is not taken. Let me therefore make a personal appeal to donors - especially to the European Commission, some of the European governments and other countries whose support has recently declined or has never been commensurate with their economic possibilities: unless fresh contributions are forthcoming, UNHCR will face a severe funding shortfall; and unless commitments for next year's budget are honoured, we will face the same situation in 2001. I deeply regret that this may happen as a new High Commissioner takes the leadership of the Office.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNHCR marks its fiftieth anniversary in December this year. But our longevity is no cause for celebration. UNHCR remains necessary because persecution and conflict force an ever greater number of people to flee their homes. So in our anniversary year, we are not celebrating UNHCR but rather refugees - their courage, their determination and their capacity for survival against all odds.

On December 14th, the independent Refugee Education Trust will be launched as the lasting legacy of UNHCR's 50th anniversary. The Trust will give refugee adolescents in developing countries opportunities for post-primary education. The focus will be on providing quality education to the largest number of refugees where the needs are greatest. I hope that you will all find ways to support this important initiative.

I also hope - and trust - that you will continue to support this organisation. After ten years, I can tell you confidently that UNHCR's staff - to whom I am so indebted for all its support and its often heroic efforts - is remarkable. And UNHCR's cause is crucial - and will remain so for long.

I am often asked: what has been the greatest success, and the greatest failure, of these ten years?

It is a difficult question, and I can think of only one way to answer. It is to think back to the many images - sometimes happy, sometimes terrifying - that haunt my memory: images of refugees returning, clapping their hands; images of children dying, of old women crying for help. The faces of refugees have been the clearest mirrors of our failures, and of our successes. Positive results gave me strength to continue. Seeing the suffering of people made me sad and angry - and convinced me, every time, that our work was needed.

The suffering of refugees - with which my colleagues and myself deal every day throughout the world - is immense. So is the joy of people who return to their home after years of exile. Both are much greater and deeper than words can describe. They speak to us, and I will say no more - except, perhaps, to exhort you in the words of the song that we have chosen as slogan for UNHCR's 50th anniversary: respect. Respect your own commitment to protect the poorest of the poor, those who have lost their homes. Respect humanitarian workers, who are with them on the frontlines.

And above all, respect refugees.

Thank you.

ANNEX III

Chairman's summary of the millennium theme --
"UNHCR@50: from response to solutions"

(Wednesday, 4 October 2000)

The scope and range of the debate on the annual theme -- "UNHCR@50: from response to solutions" -- has been thoughtful and stimulating. As so many of you noted, the 50th anniversary is an appropriate moment to reflect upon what we have accomplished. It is also a moment to consider what we must achieve in the future and how we can work together to accomplish it. Here, in my concluding remarks, it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive summing up, but rather to highlight some of the main directions of our debate.

Before I do that, however, I should like to join with you in the very kind and sincere tributes paid to the High Commissioner and her staff throughout our two and a half days of discussion. She said in her opening remarks that she wants to leave us with a future rather than a legacy. You have made it clear that she has left both: a future with hope and challenges and a wonderful legacy upon which to build that future. Some of you even felt that there is now an "Ogata doctrine" giving us guidance for our joint endeavours in the 21st century.

Also, I would like to echo the many expressions of sympathy and concern for the victims and their families of the tragic events last month in Indonesia and Guinea. I should also note the appreciation of this Committee for the eloquent remarks of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme on the brutal killings. As the Secretary-General noted, humanitarian workers were targeted "not in spite of being humanitarian workers...but precisely because of that fact." The Executive Director further pointed out that United Nations staff members "give everything they've got to save people living in the worst circumstances on earth. They should not have to give their lives." Now the chorus of condemnation and outrage that has been heard here must be translated into appropriate action to ensure the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel wherever they are working.

Let me turn to some of the themes of our debate. The High Commissioner's opening remarks and the Millennium Theme Paper provided us with an excellent starting point. She highlighted five areas for future action: strengthening UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity; creating a secure environment for refugee-populated areas and humanitarian operations; developing new approaches to complex forced population movements; bridging the gap between humanitarian and development assistance in the transition from war to peace; and promoting co-existence in divided communities. These are directly related to the solutions discussed in the

increasing security, linking humanitarian assistance [illegible]

Your comments, in response to these presentations, help us to reflect more deeply on these proposals, and strengthen them with the perspectives of Member States, regional organizations, United Nations and other agencies and organizations, and civil society. All are UNHCR's invaluable partners in this long-term endeavour. We have also heard the voices of refugee women during this week's session. All have spoken to sources of conflict, responses and solutions.

Causes

In terms of root causes, many have noted that there are a variety of factors that can lead to conflict and resulting mass displacement. They include poverty, lack of development, ethnic hatred, greed, and violations of human rights. Any solutions, to be effective and sustainable, must address these root causes in a comprehensive, cooperative, and coordinated manner.

Responses

In responding to refugee situations, UNHCR was called upon to keep protection as its primary goal; considerable support was voiced for strengthening the institution of asylum. The 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol were referred to as the cornerstone of international protection. The Global Consultations that have been launched were enthusiastically welcomed as a chance to reconfirm this.

Over its 50-year history, UNHCR's responses have been adjusted to the requirements in the field. Challenges for improvement, however, still remain. Many recognized that UNHCR's response and surge capacity need to be further strengthened and adjusted to increasingly complex emergencies. In adapting to this new climate, cooperation between UNHCR and its partners, including Member States, is increasingly essential to deal with the wide-ranging needs of refugees and other persons of concern. Within the refugee populations, the needs of vulnerable groups require special consideration. The debate evidenced clearly that there is an urgent and critical need of providing security of humanitarian staff as well the civilian populations caught in the midst of conflict, which, tragically, has become more apparent than ever. As one of you commented, "If relief workers are not safe, no one is". Indeed, if those who seek to protect others are threatened, the crucial function of international protection is at stake.

In carrying out these varied responsibilities, UNHCR's efforts will be enhanced through lessons learnt as is evident from the Kosovo evaluation. You welcomed UNHCR's willingness in this respect.

Solutions

In terms of solutions, you reaffirmed that voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution. Some recognized the importance of local integration and resettlement, highlighting the benefits refugees bring to their societies. Long-term solutions require the involvement of a wide range of actors. Many of you commented on the important contributions that can be made by regional

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International organizations, in turn, may have to better adjust their programmes to the specific needs and circumstances of recipient countries.

Forging a link between humanitarian assistance and development aid -- bridging the "gap" -- is vital for post-conflict peace building, but such efforts require increased and predictable levels of funding in a balanced manner. Other important considerations are capacity building, anchoring refugees in the communities they return to and promoting a culture of peace and coexistence. In these activities, it is important to involve all sectors of society, including refugees and returnees, and to keep in mind the needs of vulnerable groups. As the Millennium Theme Paper states, "Any vision of the 21st century must have peace building as an essential component, combining the strengths of individuals, states and the community of nations towards this goal."

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